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Death and Burial

When a person is dying, all the kin within reach gather round him; otherwise the agony would be much prolonged. Hippolyto's wife fought death for two hours until the arrival of Nino, her husband's paternal uncle, who sent for her husband. Already unconscious, she expired as soon as Hippolyto arrived at her side. Paternal male relatives, primarily brothers and uncles, dig the grave, but other kin also help. They clip the hair, if it has grown excessively during illness, placing the surplus hair next to the body. Nino told me that, on the occasion of his father's death, his mother had the shaman Romão called in, who took down the invisible hammock of the deceased's soul (načii'), rolled it up, and placed it beside the body. At the dead person's side of the house are placed a bit of food and a little drink that he liked when he was alive. All the Tukuna whom I consulted agreed that in ancient times the body was buried, with knees flexed, in an urn; it was decorated with armbands, tooth necklaces, and glass beads. The deceased never had his weapons with him in the grave, lest his načii' use them against living persons. A pot was placed upside down over the mouth of the urn. Thus it was carried to the cemetery (ta'uke) and buried, not very deeply. Over the grave, which was sometimes marked with a stake of muirapiranga wood, the food was placed which previously had been put at the side of the corpse when it was in the house, or a little maize, water, and fire; otherwise, the načii' would come at night and disturb the provisions kept in the house. Highly regarded persons, especially children, were buried inside the house, which was not burned down. 763 764

There are no reports of secondary burial. Weeping of relatives for the deceased was, and is, moderate, and there are no attempts at suicide, mutilations, or injuries motivated by mourning. Upon returning from the burial, all bathe, rubbing themselves with calabash tree (*Crescentia cuyeté*) leaves to free themselves of the smell of the corpse. The house is swept, but not the path to the cemetery. On that, however, they scatter the leaves of a plant called deatę, which serve as flails, arraias (lit., rays, skates) for the načii', impeding their return. 765 [783]

On the left bank of the Igarapé da Rita, a little above Hippolyto's place, an ancient cemetery was discovered, containing many burial pots with bones and beads, covered with flat receptacles. Bates also refers to Tukuna urn burial: "The dead bodies of their chiefs are interred, the knees doubled up, in large jars under the floor of their huts." Tessmann describes a form of burial so different that his informant must have referred to funeral customs of some other tribe with which he was acquainted: 764 114 [172]

> Alle Leute, Häuptlinge, gewöhnliche Leute und Kinder werden gleichartig bestattet und zwar in einem Kanu das mit Holzplatten zugedeckt wird. Dieser Sarg wird nicht in den Häusern begraben sondern ausserhalb, in der Pflanzung.... Bei Zauberern wird die Leiche nicht wieder ausgegraben, wohl aber bei Lichtmenschen. Es geschieht nach etwa vier Monaten. Die Schädel und alle Knochen werden herausgenommen, sauber gereinigt, in Körbe getan und an einer besonderen Stelle, die Tauke genannt wird, von neuem bestattet. Es soll ein kleiner Hügel über dieser Stelle aufgehäuft werden.

Canoe burial was practiced by the Omágua, of whom Heriarte wrote in 1662: "When they die they are buried, taken to the river with great ceremony and with

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754 682 Threatened with death, he fled to the Rio Jacurapá, a tributary on the left bank of the Içá. At the Igarapé da Rita, when I arrived there in May, 1942, they had accused him of having caused the death of the wife of an Indian named Hippolyto čẽ'rẽk|, nephew of Nino ẹvẽn|"k|; the death of another Indian's wife; the grave illness of the wife of Sebastião, Nino's brother; and finally, the illness of Hippolyto himself.

123 754 682 I encountered Hippolyto in a condition already quite serious, treated him with medicines and an adequate diet during my entire first stay in the igarapé, visited him daily, and finally effected a cure. A day later, however, he again awoke suddenly in a desperate state. As soon as he recovered his speech he told us that during the night he had seen the soul of the warlock u'iru climbing up the door of the house, armed with a club with which to kill him. In fact, u'iru struck him many blows on the head, knocking him off the platform on which he slept. While Hippolyto still lay struggling on the floor, his little boys ran to call relatives who lived close by, Sebastião and Nino. These immediately ran to Hippolyto's aid and found him stretched out senseless on the floor. However, he recovered rapidly, especially [755] after the intervention of the shaman Benedicto, to whom I myself paid a knife, a handful of cheap glass beads, and a piece of tobacco to make him treat the case, seeing that what Hippolyto needed most was spiritual medicine in accordance with his mentality. That is how I left him when I moved from Igarapé da Rita to Igarapé de São Jeronymo on the twenty-second of May. On the fifth of June, Christovão e'k|rak|, another brother of Nino and uncle of Hippolyto, while fishing in the Rio Solimões suddenly espied u'iru and his family descending the river below toward the Jacurapá, and advised his kinfolk immediately. Hippolyto then decided that the hour of vengeance was at hand, in which decision he was supported by his uncles Nino and Christovão. With all speed the three pursued u'iru in two canoes. They caught up with him in the middle of the Solimões, overpowered him, bound him hand and foot, and threw him into the river. They struck the oldest child, some three or four years old, with their paddles, also throwing it into the water. The youngest child was torn from its mother's arms and was also drowned. They struck the woman several times and tossed her into the river, too, but Christovão pulled her into his canoe and thus saved her life. The kinsmen of Hippolyto had deliberately carried out the slaughter of the sorcerer without spilling blood, [783] for the spilling of blood would have greatly complicated the subsequent purification rite.

The three slayers returned immediately to their houses, which were situated a short distance from one another on the Igarapé da Rita. Shortly before arriving at Christovão's home they landed the woman at the door of Custodio, a friendly, hard-working old Indian with a large family, who was the father-in-law of Christovão and Nino. This woman succeeded in so frightening old Custodio, lest Hippolyto and his uncles attack and destroy him and his household, that from one hour to the next he decided to flee with his entire family, very much against the wishes of his adult son, who had a good plantation at his place and all the necessary material ready for a new house. But they did leave, taking with them u'iru's widow, and sought refuge among a group of Tukuna inhabiting a tributary on the left bank of the lower Rio Jandiatuba.

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Nino and Christovão did not stop at home but, without eating or speaking to anyone, immediately left together on a hurried trip to Igarapé de Belém in search of a certain shaman for the purification the situation demanded. Hippolyto, however, weak from his long illness, arrived home so exhausted that he was again prostrated for days, incapable of following his uncles. The latter, after battling the strong currents of the Solimões all day, entered the Igarapé de Belém on the seventh. They should not have eaten anything before submitting to the purification rite, but their strength began to fail them, so they comforted themselves with a little farinha d'agua they had, eating it with spoons fashioned from leaves in order to prevent the soul (naa'ẽ) of the murdered man from entering their bodies with the food. If they had shed blood, they would also have used a stick to scratch with, instead of their fingernails, since, if blood is shed, the slayer's body becomes full of invisible blood. They did not converse during the trip, but spoke occasionally to a tree or to an ant nest as if these were people, saluting and taking leave of them and leaving them a bit of food, as if they were members of the family. Had they not followed such procedure, the soul of the slain would have entered the body of someone in the slayer's family.

Finally, they approached the residence of the shaman Geraldo, of the ɲɔ|' clan (red macaw clan), whom Nino as a member of the same moiety addressed as ma'i"ẽ, "brother" (p. 59). Showing themselves to him from afar and signaling, they made Geraldo realize that something extraordinary had happened, so he immediately went to meet them and asked what had occurred. They answered in a few words in a low voice, and he ordered them to draw the canoe ashore a bit farther ahead. Geraldo, returning to his house, bade his daughters scrape genipapo and prepare food, saying to them: "They did a turn for all of us; they killed our enemy!"

Then he joined the two men, ordered them to squat before him, and, passing his hands over them from the heels to the crown of the head, removed from them the soul of the slain, joined it together in front of them, and hurled it away, saying: "Go away! We have done this to you because you were the enemy of everyone!" Then he gave each man three peppers to eat and finally painted them with genipapo, which he had already brought on top of some leaves. He led them to the house, gave them food, and bade them farewell. Spurred by anxiety for their families, who had been left hiding in their plantations, the two again left for the Igarapé da Rita, where they arrived the morning of June 9.

As stated above, Hippolyto could not accompany the others on the trip they made in order to purify themselves, and he treated himself as best he could. Under these circumstances, the slayer, feeling the dead man's soul squeezing his heart, must for two months drink a brew made from pupunheira root (*Gulielma* sp.).

Meanwhile I was attending a puberty ceremony celebrated in a house half a league up the mouth of the Igarapé da Rita, on the Solimões, where some other guests informed me of the event. After the feast I went down to the settlement of Santa Rita, where the Neobrazilians told me with evident satisfaction that "the Indians of the igarapé had all fled." I at once entered this tributary, where I found all the Indians except the family of old Custodio, who had actually fled but later on returned at my invitation. From place to place the Indians accompanied me, increasing in number at each stop, until we were all gathered at Nino's house,

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754 682 including the slayers, who had arrived that morning, horribly painted with black from head to foot. The atmosphere was rather anxious, and their satisfaction at seeing me so unexpectedly was obvious, especially on Nino's part; if I had not come, they would have searched for me the following day at Igarapé de São Jeronymo, where I made my headquarters. Calmly and clearly Nino told me what had happened: "We had to do it. But now that it is done I don't want to fool with anyone else, just live in peace," he said. But naturally the case was not closed.

The civilized authorities, though aware of what had happened, made no move, but a brother of the dead man, informed by another relative, came from the outskirts of Belém with his three grown sons in pursuit of the slayers. Strangely enough, the party first came ashore at the place of another brother of Nino and Christovão who lived by himself on the banks of the Solimões, and he immediately sent to warn his kinsman. It is clear that if the sorcerer's brother had come to avenge u'iru's death immediately, he would not have pulled ashore at the house of the murderers' brother.

However, Nino, Christovão, and Hippolyto passed the night together with loaded shotguns and machetes at hand. The night was absolutely dark. About nine o'clock, when I rashly went down to the landing, accompanied by Nino's three sons, we saw slowly approaching from the river a small light, resembling the lighted cigarette of a person silently rowing inshore; it finally stopped. Frightened, the children ran to the house while I went down to the landing, where I discovered that the light was due to a large firefly that had lit on one of the canoes inshore.

I turned back with the insect in my hand, when all the Indians in the house came from all sides to meet me, for they were terrified at my unheard-of audacity. The [774] point was that the arrival of a sorcerer's soul is announced in the dark by a small [293] firefly-like light that emanates from the tucum-nut ring the sorcerer, like most Tukuna, wears on his finger. My attitude in abstaining from all criticism or moral [123] judgment and in accepting the tragedy as a consummated fact visibly cleared the atmosphere and calmed their spirits. When I returned to Igarapé de São Jeronymo on the following day, the situation was almost back to normal.

In fact, until my departure in September nothing untoward occurred. However, I believe that the brother of the murdered u'iru will still try to avenge him at the first opportunity.

Another method of purification.—According to what he himself told me, Calixto 783 daueru'kl, to whom also killers repair for purification, has a method slightly different from that of his colleague Geraldo. First he washes the slayer's arms from 775 top to bottom with envira de matamatá. Then he invokes the soul of the slain, by means of a song and tobacco smoke. The dead man's soul, surrounded by the smoke, which it involuntarily swallows, finally crouches down, weak and inoffensive, before the shaman, who covers it with still more smoke and, fanning the smoke, makes the soul disappear. Afterward he paints with genipapo dye only the forearms of the killer. Even with this, however, the dead man's soul is not completely annihilated. Thus, after the death of čU'na, a Peruvian sorcerer who had fled to Brazil, where he was killed by pursuers from his own country, his soul "shot" his brother-in-law with "arrows," a fact recognized by the shaman Airú of Ilha dos Guaribas, who succeeded in curing the sufferer.

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Such are the legends. The idea of heaven as an upper world similar to the earth and with inhabitants like those of the world below is encountered in the legends of the culture-hero brothers relating to the theft of fire (see p. 130) and the origin of languages. These tell how in the old days there was free passage between the two worlds, how this was interrupted, and how thereafter an attempt was made to reëstablish it. All these motives are so common in American mythology that they do not merit further comment.

ta-ë′ *and the souls.*—Quite different, however, is the concept of the most important personage of the upper world, ta-ë′. I do not know of any similar figure in the religion of other tribes. Nothing is known of her origin. She is apparently as ancient as the heaven in which she lives, and is immortal but definitely not omnipotent, nor omniscient, nor infallible. Overburdened with tasks, she may involuntarily cause damage to men through her mistakes. Nothing material in the world was created by her, nor does she govern anything; therefore she is neither the "Common Mother" nor the "Primary Mother" in Baldus' terminology.

Prayers are not directed to her, nor does she receive sacrifices. She has nothing to do directly with the culture-hero brothers, who equal her in importance, or with the spirits of the trees or the demons (ñɔɔ′) of the lower world. No shaman is in communication with her. Nevertheless, for the Tukuna she is a figure of great importance and respect, because of her inseparable connection with the notion of sin and subsequent punishment, in life or after death, since she is the mistress of that part of the human soul called "naa′ë." With the other part of the soul, called "načii′" (shade of the deceased), she has nothing to do.

ta-ë′ does not represent a divine justice that tots up the sins and good deeds of the soul. She takes into consideration only three categories of crime: incest, infanticide (including voluntary abortion), and murder through witchcraft. She does not bother with such trifles as theft or a hot-blooded killing. Incest (vɔ:′mači) is a transgression of the law of exogamy which she established when she taught the first men to which clan each belonged, making them taste the jacuruxy broth (see pp. 58 and 130); this was the only time, however, that she intervened in the work of the culture heroes. Incest is the only crime for which ta-ë′ eventually punishes the sinner, by madness while he is still living.

I have already discussed the fate of an infanticide's soul (p. 69). When the soul of a sorcerer appears before ta-ë′, she treats it in the same fashion as she does that of an infanticide; in fact, the three sins mentioned above are considered almost equal. The gravity of a crime depends upon whether the sin was committed thoughtlessly and with some extenuating circumstances, and whether it is repeated.

If there are extenuating circumstances, the sinner is purified by one of the čorë′ruma, which licks him from toe to crown. However, even if the naa′ë of a perverse and stubborn sinner slips past the tɔ/ri′ta gate, it is torn to shreds by the čorë′ruma or rejected by ta-ë′, who orders lightning to cast it down on the earth again, or even sends it below to the underworld (na:′pɨ), where it is transformed into a tiny frog (nʊ:′gʊ), with whose death it vanishes.

It is noteworthy that the Tukuna regard as crimes these three sins which not only harm the individual but are also ruinous for humanity as a whole: "Thou